

# How can the pitching research framework assist in summarising and presenting research ideas? A research pitching competition story

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## Abstract

This letter's main objective is to provide a unique insight into an application of the "pitching research" framework by Faff (2015,2021). In particular, it shows how the framework can be useful to help young researchers write concise academic literature even after they have come up with their own ideas. To further explore this claim, the author offers a personal reflection on how to use the framework to summarise a twenty-page-long research proposal down to a one-thousand-word summary which ended up winning him the 2022 InSPiR2eS Global Pitching Research Competition.

**Keywords:** Pitching Research; Blockchain Configuration; Framework; Framework; Financial Ecosystem

**JEL codes:** O33

## 1. Introduction

Ever since I was properly introduced to performing research, my passion for researching has driven me to continuously come up with many fascinating ideas to share with my colleagues, research mentors, and researchers in related fields. However, I constantly face the challenge of writing discursive ideas, which discourages most readers from seriously engaging with them. Because of that, Dr Duc Phan from RMIT Melbourne introduced me to Professor Robert Faff's pitching

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research framework (Faff, 2015, 2021). I was then further exposed to the framework from other researchers' experiences, inspirational stories, and useful lessons for beginners at the informative seminars hosted by the Knowledge Bridge Network.<sup>2</sup> Reading about Professor Faff's Pitching Research Framework (PRF) has enabled me to comprehend further each article's crucial principles, such as the research goals, theory, tools, and more. Thus I decided to write this letter to share my personal experience in using the PRF. Many letters have explored the framework's effectiveness in helping young researchers formulate valuable research ideas (see, for example, Maxwell, 2017; Manchha, 2017). This letter contributes to understanding the framework by showing how young researchers can use it to capture the most significant contributions and reasonings of their already established research ideas. This process is done by "reverse-engineering" a research proposal back into the framework (Salehudin, 2017), then using the framework as a baseline to refine the research proposal itself.

The remainder of this letter proceeds as follows. The second section focuses on applying the framework in my pitching research, the third section discusses my experiences in developing pitching research using Professor Faff's framework, and the final section provides a conclusion. Overall, these sections include a retrospective view of my experiences in pitching research.

## **2. Usage of the framework in the pitching research competition**

I first had the opportunity to try using the framework during the 2022 InSPiR2eS Global Pitching Research Competition.<sup>3</sup> My challenge during the competition was not to create a unique and interesting idea, for I already had it. In particular, my idea was to create a "blockchain configuration framework" for financial ecosystems to adopt blockchain. Instead, my main challenge was using the pitching research framework to succinctly summarise my research idea. Finally, professor Robert Faff's (2015, 2021) research pitching framework helped me to turn a 20-page research proposal into a 1,000-word summary and thus helped me win the competition. This section demonstrates the application of the framework in my research. Specifically, it describes how Faff's framework was used to summarise my

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<sup>2</sup> Knowledge Bridge Network (KBN) (Vietnamese: Nhip Cầu Tri Thức) is a Vietnamese non-profit organisation with an aim to connect young Vietnamese researchers to the international academic world. More information can be found at: <https://nhipcauthuc.org/>

<sup>3</sup> The 2022 InSPiR2eS Global Pitching Research Competition (IGPRC 2022) is a global-scale competition for young researchers to pitch their research ideas, hosted by Professor Robert Faff's InSPiR2eS Network. More information can be found at: <https://pitchingresearch.com/inspir2es/June-2022/> & <https://bit.ly/3SLPIIZ> (see news item on 11th July 2022)

research ideas, while still managing to focus on its most important novelties and contributions. The key points are presented linearly based on the pitching framework's format. Table A1 in the appendix includes the "reverse-engineered" research pitching framework for my research idea.

The first item features a meaningful and concise working title, which is "Constructing a Blockchain Configuration Framework for Various Financial Systems". This title "works" because it is less than ten words while being able to be descriptive of the entire research pitch. Moreover, the majority of the words are important keywords that appear throughout the document. Therefore, the title can be easily referred to or comprehended during the literature review phase.

The second item raises a valid and comprehensive research question: "How can blockchain be configured to match significant characteristics of financial ecosystems?". As the amount of available material surpasses my ability to comprehend and generate a definitive topic for the research project, section B of Faff's framework is applied to pinpoint the key question to help determine the subject of the paper. Thus, it helps me improve the clarity of the question and the pitching research topic.

The third part of the project's identifier section is the three important reference papers. By utilising the pitching framework, I am able to select three articles that are most amenable for referencing throughout the project among a list of over one hundred papers. The first article, Allen *et al.* (2020), helps me realise that blockchain can be usefully viewed as an institutional technology, similar to a firm or a government. The second article, Liang *et al.* (2021), assists me in pointing out the current weaknesses of the existing technology adoption model when they attempt to explain blockchain adoption. Finally, the third article, Pappas and Woodside (2021), guides me on how to resolve my research question using the Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) data analysis method. As a result, this section helps me refine my ideas by eliminating redundant references, which is crucial for the research project. Therefore, this part helps me focus my writing on the truly significant references.

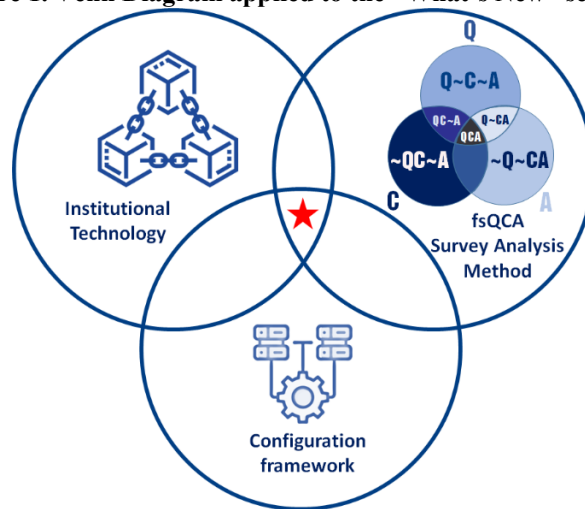
The fourth part presents many of the important motivations and challenges of the current project. Specifically, this section further explains my reason for selecting the topic and supporting the working title's name. It thus assists me greatly in linking the problem in the current research adoption literature, which I raise in the research question, with the methods I will use to bridge this research gap. Thanks to this section, the ideas featured in my frameworks' next section can be concisely and effectively developed. Writing this part well allows me to pinpoint the research gap and provide a concrete solution.

In the fifth part, I highlight my ideas for a configuration framework to explain blockchain adoption. Professor Faff’s framework continues to be used to summarise a new and complicated research idea. The result is a simple three-step format of how to use a configuration framework to identify the “best match” between blockchain’s many adjustable characteristics and those of the adopting financial ecosystems. Thanks to the pitching research framework, I was able to set a succinct but solid foundation for my research idea.

The sixth and seventh parts present the data and the tools used, separated into two complementary parts that are qualitative and quantitative. This approach was chosen accordingly based on the pitching framework’s strict information limit, and it demonstrates the data as well as the tools clearly and concisely. Therefore, it allows me to explain my research method in the simplest way possible without going into too much detail.

The eighth part answers the “What’s New?” question. This section helps me decide the points I want to “advertise” about my research idea. In order to accomplish this task, I rely on the guidelines of Faff (2015, 2021), in which the author recommends I use a “Mickey Mouse” diagram method as follows. Consequently, I manage to select three overlapping selling points, as shown in Figure 1 below. First, my research idea considers blockchain as an institutional technology rather than a general-purpose one. Second, I consider the fsQCA survey analysis method to be the most suitable method for constructing a framework for blockchain adoption. Finally, I choose to construct a configuration framework in order to identify what are the necessary characteristics of blockchain leading to its adoption. Thanks to the framework’s advice, I have successfully defined the project’s novelty.

**Figure 1. Venn Diagram applied to the “What’s New” section**



The ninth part also utilises professor Faff’s pitching framework to select the most important value that the research potentially can deliver to different practical stakeholders. For this part, I use the “Mickey mouse” diagram technique taught by the pitching framework to explain which stakeholders my research impacts, how my research can change their perspective and the overall discipline significance of the research. In particular, the stakeholders my research aims to impact are the organisation managers and policymakers. I hope the research can change their perspective on blockchain into an easily adjustable institutional technology for those two stakeholders. Consequently, this research project aims to enhance the discipline’s significance by allowing the managers to choose the preferred blockchain configuration to adopt into their organisation. As for the policymakers, it aims to impact their choice of policies in order to both support and govern blockchain adoption in financial ecosystems. The “Mickey Mouse” diagram in Figure 2 below depicts my method, which is the union of the three most important values: “Discipline Significance”, “Stakeholder Impact”, and “Change The Way We Think”.

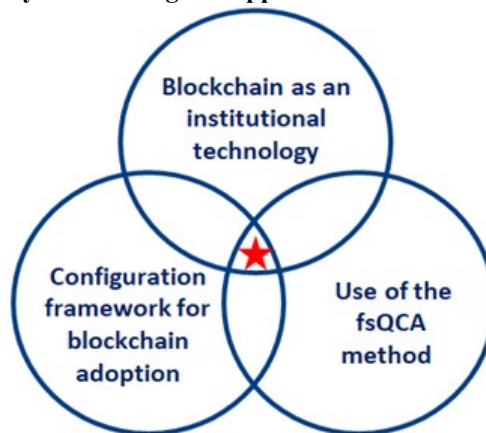
**Figure 2. Mickey Mouse Diagram applied to the “So What” section**



The tenth part provides the project’s bottom line, otherwise known as the “Contribution” section. This part includes the summary of the purpose of the research, which challenges the writer on how much they actually understand their own project. In this research pitch, once again, the “Mickey mouse” technique was employed to signify the three most important dimensions of contribution in the most concise way possible. First, this project aims to provide insights into the adoption process of blockchain technology as an institutional technology compared to general-purpose technology. Furthermore, a configuration framework helps introduce a blockchain adoption framework in which the most optimal combination of blockchain characteristics is chosen for each financial ecosystem’s typologies. Finally, the use of the fsQCA method is new within the technology adoption literature, so this research idea introduces yet another technique to this field of study.

The “Mickey Mouse” diagram in Figure 3 shows the methods used in the “contribution” section.

Figure 3. Mickey Mouse Diagram applied to the “Contribution” section



The final part is “Other Considerations”. This part lists all the contingency and practical plans needed to transform from a research idea into a published paper or a PhD project. This section helps me pay attention to the important aspects (but often overlooked) of how to finish your research project. In detail, the sub-sections of “Collaborations”, “Financing”, “Ethics”, “Targeted publication”, and “Risk Assessment and Plans” are all suggested by Professor Faff’s framework. I believe they are all valid concerns, especially for young researchers who have little experience converting their ideas into concrete papers or projects.

### 3. Brief commentary on the framework

The pitching framework developed by Faff (2015, 2021) provides a methodical approach for researchers seeking to organise their thoughts with new research ideas and articulate them to others. In this section, I would like to share with you how the framework helped me throughout my thinking process.

Personally, it used to be a significant challenge for me ... not so much to think of a new idea but ... to present it succinctly and in a focused form. In my opinion, this skill is necessary for every young researcher since their ideas will more often than not fail to capture attention if they cannot present them concisely. Professor Faff’s pitching research framework was what I needed to summarise and effectively present my research ideas. In seeking to understand the framework, I further received help from the informative seminars hosted by the Knowledge Bridge Network. I also enjoyed the mentorship by Dr Duc Phan from RMIT University, Dr Binh Bui from Macquarie University, Dr Vu Bach from the University of Hawaii and Dr Tuyen

Duong from Taipei Medical University. Thanks to their support, I finally managed to master using the framework. In particular, I was able to compress my research proposal, which is longer than twenty pages, into a format of about one thousand words. Moreover, I managed to win the 2022 InSPiR2eS Global Pitching Research Competition as proof of my proficiency. By utilising Professor Faff's Research Pitching Framework, I have finally gained confidence in condensing a long research paper into a significantly shorter one.

One key factor about my experience working with the framework is that it made filtering through ideas easier and more effective. As a young researcher, my passion leads me to think about research all the time. As a result, I usually end up with an over abundance of ideas, from which I need to filter and select the best. Even when I already have the main idea in mind, like the blockchain configuration framework idea, I usually come up with many ways to explore that idea. Professor Faff's framework helps me to focus on what really matters among the abundance of ideas inside my mind.

Another key advantage that Faff's framework provided me is eliminating the process of going through multiple iterations and non-linear reading to get an arrangement of ideas. I love to read, and while it is good for my general knowledge, I do at times lose focus on what I need to further my research idea. As a result, the selected and read ideas were sometimes not key to the research project that I was doing. Thus, the framework helped me filter what I needed to read and made me feel that I have produced something tangible.

Furthermore, using the framework also helped me to improve my paper's structure and made it easier to identify key parts of the paper. This use is important for me since there have been times when I don't know where to focus my writing. Since employing the framework, I have better concentrated my writing on what matters. Therefore, I start to effectively generate succinct and significant ideas that fit well within high-quality publications. I even managed to shorten the twenty-page research proposal I used in my competition to only ten pages. This process has tremendously helped deliver my idea, and I received more positive feedback from colleagues and potential supervisors in many famed universities.

Lastly, my personal experience using the pitching research platform (at <https://pitchingresearch.com>) has provided me with materials that kickstarted my learning to use the framework. Additionally, the InSPiR2eS network also runs various competitions and events to further encourage and assist young researchers (<https://pitchingresearch.com/competitions/>). Personally, I will continue to employ the framework to produce concise ideas in future publications.

## **4. Conclusion**

With the introduction to the pitching framework by my mentor Dr Duc Phan of RMIT Melbourne, and the Knowledge Bridge Network's help, I successfully converted over twenty pages of materials into a short research pitch. I appreciate the help provided by everyone involved and especially the skill to recognise the important information needed for the elements such as the "Key paper(s)", "Motivation/Puzzle", "Idea", "Data" and "Tools" sections, when one is overwhelmed by a large source of information. Furthermore, this letter demonstrates another unique but successful implementation of Faff's pitching framework. In particular, this letter focuses on using the framework to filter a large amount of information compared to the common use case of generating ideas. In other words, this is yet another argument that the use of the pitching framework is beneficial to many phases in developing a research idea into a completed research paper. Personally, I feel the use of the framework has significantly helped me to deliver a concise presentation of my research idea, as well as turn that idea into a complete PhD proposal in a short time.

Using the pitching framework not only introduced me to a fresh perspective on information selection but also delivered some tangible benefits for my research career's development. Therefore, I strongly encourage other researchers to consider using the pitching framework.

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Appendix

Table 1. The completed research pitching paper using Professor Faff's

Pitcher's Name	FOUR	VU NGUYEN	For category	Technology adoption	Date completed
(A) Working Title	FOUR	Four Picture Anchors			08-05-2022
(B) Basic Research Question			<b>Constructing a Blockchain Configuration Framework for Various Financial Ecosystems</b>		
(C) Key paper(s)			How can blockchain be configured to match significant characteristics of financial ecosystems?		
(D) Motivation/Puzzle			<p>1. Allen, D. W., Berg, C., Markey-Jowler, B., Novak, M. &amp; Potts, J. (2020) "Blockchain and the evolution of institutional technologies: Implications for innovation policy", <i>Research Policy</i>, vol. 49, no. 1: 103865.</p> <p>2. Liang, T. P., Kohli, R., Huang, H. C. &amp; Li, Z. L. (2021) "What drives the adoption of blockchain technology? A fit-viability perspective", <i>Journal of Management Information Systems</i>, vol. 38, no. 2: 314-337.</p> <p>3. Pappas, I. O. &amp; Woodside, A. G. (2021) "Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA): Guidelines for research practice in Information Systems and marketing", <i>International Journal of Information Management</i>, no. 58: 102310.</p> <p>Prior literature confirms a need to adopt blockchain in financial ecosystems (FES), defined as a system of interlinked and interoperable business and financial information and information providers (O'Riain <i>et al.</i>, 2012), to improve payment transparency, efficiency, trust, security and reduce costs for firms and users (Leong <i>et al.</i>, 2017). However, existing technological frameworks cannot fully explain blockchain adoption (Liang <i>et al.</i>, 2021) because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prior technology adoption models are mainly for individuals or organisations (Nysveen <i>et al.</i>, 2020). =&gt; Being a network technology, blockchain adoption requires considering a whole FE instead of separate entities (Liang <i>et al.</i>, 2021).</li> <li>2. Past models' technology adoption decisions are only an "accept/reject" outcome, without recommending how/which technology version should be adopted. =&gt; According to Allen <i>et al.</i> (2020), the fitness of blockchain adoption depends on how its characteristics are configured. Therefore, the key question for blockchain adoption is "which blockchain version should be employed" instead of "whether it should be adopted".</li> <li>3. Existing technology adoption frameworks focus on general-purpose instead of institutional technologies. Thus they mostly consider institutional characteristics independent variables (Allen <i>et al.</i>, 2020). =&gt; Being an institutional technology, blockchain adoption would potentially change the existing institutional characteristics, rendering them no longer independent.</li> </ol>		

Pitcher's Name	VU NGUYEN	FoR category	Technology adoption	Date completed
<b>THREE</b>	Three essential Building Blocks			
<b>(E) Idea?</b>	<p>A new <b>blockchain configuration framework (BCF)</b> is required for FEs to adopt this new institutional technology. This study aims to build a BCF that matches financial ecosystems' characteristics with the most suitable blockchain configurations. The "fuzzy set" Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) method (Pappas and Woodside, 2021) is employed to create this BCF in three steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General economic characteristics of the FEs are identified, following Berg <i>et al.</i> (2019).</li> <li>2. Different FE typologies are categorised based on their general economic characteristics and blockchain adoption needs.</li> <li>3. Each FE typology is matched to the most suitable blockchain configuration(s) created from its notable characteristics, including security and privacy, extensibility, transaction capabilities, consensus algorithms, and identity management (Tasca and Tessone, 2018).</li> </ol> <p>=&gt; By employing a BCF, this study explains which blockchain version(s) is/are optimal for a given FE and whether blockchain should be employed to complement or substitute its existing institutional technology.</p>			
<b>(F) Data?</b>	<p>A two-stage <b>mixed-method approach</b> is adopted to test the BCF. Singapore and Australia are selected as sample countries to recruit participants for testing purposes due to their favourable attitudes toward blockchain (Berg <i>et al.</i>, 2019) and initial adoption success (Liang <i>et al.</i>, 2021).</p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b> Semi-structured interviews are conducted to discern the main FE typologies based on their economic characteristics and blockchain adoption needs; and the main adjustable blockchain characteristics. This research plans to interview 30-40 academics who have researched blockchain and its implication.</p> <p><b>Quantitative:</b> From the interview findings, a survey questionnaire is developed and conducted with 300 participants since it is expected of the BCF to have 30 constructs (Hair <i>et al.</i> 2014). The questionnaire design is reviewed by an expert panel including three academic experts in finance and blockchain to ensure content validity. The survey is then distributed to two groups of participants: technical developers and financial sector managers of companies currently adopting/planning to adopt blockchain. Participants are recruited and followed up via e-mails to the Top 200 companies on the Singaporean and Australian Stock Exchanges (Jones and Higgins, 2006).</p>			
<b>(G) Tools?</b>	<p><b>Qualitative:</b> Due to Covid-19, the research uses Zoom for online interviews and video recordings. The coding of the transcribed interview data, i.e. grouping into patterns into themes, is done via Nvivo. Main themes/nodes include the characteristics of the FEs which have the potential to initiate blockchain adoption, and the most significant configurations of a blockchain system. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the themes are coded and verified between two researchers (Sarrós <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p>			

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Pitcher's Name	VU NGUYEN	IoR category	Technology adoption	Date completed	08-05-2022
	<p><b>Quantitative:</b> The research uses anonymous Google Forms for online surveys. The data is cleansed and coded in IBM-SPSS software. Afterwards, the fsQCA tool is applied to analyse the survey's results to link the most suitable blockchain factors for each FE typology in relation to their characteristics (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). This method allows for grouping blockchain characteristics that best match those of each FE typology. It also allows for "equifinality", meaning it's possible to have more than one set of "best-match" characteristics (Pappas &amp; Woodside 2021).</p>				
<b>TWO</b>	<p><b>Two key questions</b></p>				
<b>(H) What's New?</b>	<p>By examining blockchain as an <b>institutional technology</b> rather than a general-purpose one, this research provides a novel perspective of how adopting blockchain complements and/or competes with existing institutions inside an FE. In addition, the <b>fsQCA survey analysis method</b> has not been widely used in the technology adoption literature. By utilising this method, this research offers a new way to identify which set(s) of blockchain configurations are most suitable for each existing FE typology.</p>				
<b>(I) So What?</b>	<p>This research aims to change the perspective of <b>financial firms' managers</b> to consider blockchain adoption as an <b>institutional technology</b> instead of a general-purpose one. They can also utilise this framework to adopt the most suitable blockchain configuration(s), given the FE-based characteristics of their organisations. In addition, this research also helps <b>policy makers</b> identify the most suitable policies to support/govern blockchain adoption in the context of different FEs. Finally, the framework also assists managers and policymakers in determining whether blockchain is needed to complement or substitute the existing institutions in different FE typologies.</p>				
<b>ONE</b>	<p><b>One bottom line</b></p>				
<b>(J) Contribution?</b>	<p>Current technology adoption frameworks mainly focus on general-purpose technologies. By considering blockchain's adoption as a complement/substitute for existing institutions, this research provides insights into the adoption process of an institutional technology versus a general-purpose one. Furthermore, it employs the blockchain context to clarify how the characteristics of FEs determine which configuration(s)/version(s) of new technology should be adopted. By using fsQCA, this research also provides a new method for survey data analysis for future technology adoption research.</p>				
<b>(K) Considerations</b>	<p><b>Other</b></p> <p><b>Collaborations:</b> Singaporean/Australian researchers to facilitate access to participants.</p> <p><b>Financing:</b> External funding from organisations/institutions supporting blockchain adoption to hire assistants helping with data collection/analysis.</p> <p><b>Ethics:</b> Participation in qualitative/quantitative studies is voluntary. Participants can withdraw one month before project completion, and no personal information is recorded. Ethical clearance is sought from the researcher's institutions.</p> <p><b>Targeted publication:</b> International Journal of Information Management (<b>Q1, H index 114, IF 8.21</b>)</p> <p><b>Risk Assessment and Plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low interview/survey response rate:</b> Using financial incentives.</li> <li>• <b>No funding/research assistance:</b> Calling for collaboration and co-authorship.</li> <li>• <b>Biased responses:</b> Recruiting participants from a wider set of ethnicity, educational, and blockchain experience.</li> </ul>				